



AOT in Action

TOURISM WORKS FOR ARIZONA!

Welcome to AOT in Action, your weekly e-newsletter from the Arizona Office of Tourism (AOT).

A Message from the Director:

Good morning.

For the past few weeks we've been highlighting information in *AOT in Action* for our Teamwork for Effective Arizona Marketing (TEAM) Certification workshops. TEAM is a wonderful matching grant program we offer to statewide tourism organizations and tribal entities to help enhance and develop their local marketing efforts. These local marketing efforts, in conjunction with the national and regional advertising efforts of AOT, help maintain a strong tourism industry throughout Arizona. The workshops provide community members a comprehensive look at AOT's matching grant program and describe the application process for the grant. To further assist communities and organization with their tourism planning and development, this year's seminars will also include information on how to develop a marketing plan. TEAM workshops are a great opportunity for members of Arizona communities to learn how to produce innovative and effective marketing material to bring visitors to their destinations.

For more information please see the news brief below.

Have a great week.

Margie A. Emmermann
Director
Arizona Office of Tourism

AOT News Flash

Teamwork for Effective Arizona Marketing (TEAM) FY 2008 Certification Workshops – SAVE the DATE

The Arizona Office of Tourism is pleased to present our FY 2008 Teamwork for Effective Arizona Marketing (TEAM) Certification workshops. TEAM workshops are designed to provide comprehensive information on AOT's matching grant program and the applications process. To further assist communities and organization with their tourism planning and development, this year's workshop will also include information on how to develop a marketing plan. AOT offers the opportunity to attend a workshop in one of five Arizona communities: Phoenix, Sierra Vista, Kingman, Flagstaff, and Show Low. Workshop attendance is mandatory for those organizations who wish to apply for matching grant funding for FY 2008. To RSVP for a workshop, please contact Sarah Martins at 602-364-3687 or via email at smartins@azot.gov. Please see below dates and locations, more information to follow.

February 20, 2007

1 p.m. – 3 p.m.

Powerhouse Visitor Center
120 W Andy Devine Ave
Kingman, AZ 86401

February 22, 2007

1 p.m. – 3 p.m.

Radisson Woodlands Hotel
1175 W. Route 66
Flagstaff, Arizona 86001

February 27, 2007

12 p.m. – 2 p.m.

Licano's
573 West Deuce of Clubs
Show Low, AZ

Trippin' with AOT

Southern California AAA Sales Mission

AOT participated in a sales mission with several Arizona Conventional and Visitor Bureaus (CVBs) targeting AAA offices in the Southern California region on February 5-9, 2007. The week began with a visit to the call center in Costa Mesa. AOT's Travel Industry Marketing Specialist, Kristy Swanson, and representatives from Chandler Tourism, the Flagstaff, Mesa, Tempe, Tucson and Yuma CVBs all hosted a catered lunch and a mini trade show for the call center staff. The delegation distributed materials from their respective organizations as well as held a prize drawing for three lucky winners who received a trip to Arizona. The rest of the week, the Arizona delegates visited AAA offices by splitting into four teams covering the southern region of California. In all, the delegation provided new Arizona information to more than 800 travel agents and auto travel representatives. For more information please contact Kristy Swanson at 602-364-3696 or via email at kswanson@azot.gov.

AOT Meets with Mexico City Media

AOT's Media Relations Division led an Arizona delegation to Mexico City last week for the 4th Annual SeeAmerica Media Marketplace in conjunction with the Expo Vacaciones Trade Show. AOT was joined by the Greater Phoenix, Scottsdale and Tempe CVBs and Westcor Shopping Centers in sharing the latest and greatest Arizona news with the more than 50 writers in attendance. In addition, AOT sponsored the prize for the annual travel writing contest, and the winner received round trip airfare for two on Aeromexico, six nights in Arizona split between The Phoenician, Westin Kierland Resort & Spa and the Pointe Hilton Resorts, and many activities including excursions to Sedona, spa treatments, tee times and shopping gift certificates for retailers such as Arizona Mills and Westcor Shopping Centers. AOT's Director of Travel Industry Marketing also attended the Expo Vacaciones trade show along with AOT's representative in Mexico City to meet with tour operators and travel agents. The Arizona delegation wrapped up the productive week with their annual Arizona media breakfast, where more than 25 travel writers were treated to a memorable meal and AOT's signature "Buenos Dias Arizona" presentation, which puts a fun spin on all of the exciting news happening throughout the state. For more information, contact Jacki Mieler at 602.364.3697 or via email at jmieler@azot.gov.

Industry News

Travel Web Sites Going Multilingual

The nation's travel giants are racing to become multilingual. Big hotel chains and major airlines are launching foreign-language Web sites to expand their international appeal and to boost e-commerce. Luxury hotel operator Ritz-Carlton will launch Chinese and Japanese sites in March. Starwood, which includes W and Sheraton, plans to add Chinese and Italian sites this year to four other languages. Marriott is working on Chinese and Spanish sites, adding to German. Hilton recently launched a Spanish site, adding to German and Japanese. It will add Chinese in 2008. InterContinental hotels, which includes Holiday Inn and Crowne Plaza, launched Arabic, Portuguese and Korean in the last two years, adding to its eight other languages. *(Page 1B, USA Today)*

US Tour Operators Form Committee to Define Responsible Tourism

The United States Tour Operators Association (USTOA) has formed a Responsible Tourism Committee. The committee will help develop and promote best practices in promoting responsible tourism for USTOA's 134 active members, according to president Bob Whitley. The committee will encourage members to engage in best practices and provide a forum for members to share experiences and develop solutions. Other plans call for providing USTOA's membership with information about international accreditation and tourism certification programs in all parts of the world, and developing training programs to help members understand and meet the standards of responsible tourism in their day-to-day operations. As part of its outreach efforts, the USTOA Responsible Tourism Committee will also establish guidelines or standards with countries and allied members that already have existing programs. In addition, the committee will provide information to media, consumers, travel agents and other industry members about the standards USTOA is advocating. The committee's first task may be its hardest: define responsible tourism. *(Report by David Wilkening, special to Travelmole.com)*

4 Rental Car Brands May Merge

A deal to combine four of the nation's largest car-rental brands--National, Alamo, Thrifty and Dollar-- is being discussed as the industry continues to consolidate. Dollar Thrifty Group, a unit of Daimler-Chrysler, is in early talks to merge with its Tulsa rival, Vanguard Car Rental, which owns National and Alamo, in a deal valued at more than \$3 billion, The New York Times reports. If completed, a deal would create the third-largest rental-car company in the U.S. behind

leaders Enterprise Rent-a-Car and Hertz, but outpace Avis Budget Group in terms of revenue. A deal could push rental-car rates higher. Prices have already risen 10 percent to 20 percent in the last year as the Big Three automakers have tried to move away from providing discounted fleet vehicles to rental-car companies. (*Page C1, New York Times*)

Las Vegas Sets Record for Visitors

Las Vegas attracted a record number of tourists in 2006 despite losing 581 rooms from its hotel inventory, the first such decrease since 1992. Las Vegas had 38.9 million visitors in 2006, up slightly less than 1 percent from 2005. The increase came despite the number of hotel rooms decreasing to 132,605. The region still managed to boost the number of visitors by boosting the occupancy rate to 89.7 percent, up half of 1 percent from the previous year. Convention traffic in 2006 increased 2.3 percent, to 6.3 million visitors, with a non-gaming economic impact of \$8.2 billion, up 7.6 percent from 2005. (*Las Vegas Review-Journal.com/Business*)

Fuel Costs Rising for Airlines

The nation's airlines paid 17 percent more for fuel last year than the year before, as many air carriers continued to struggle with high fuel costs reports [Associated Press](#). According to year-end results compiled by the Air Transport Association of America, the cost of jet fuel averaged \$1.96 per gallon last year, an increase of 17 percent from the year before. Jet fuel prices soared to nearly \$2.15 a gallon last summer, but dropped off to about \$1.89 a gallon by December, the report said. Consumption declined 2.8 percent to 19.4 million gallons in 2006. The airline industry has struggled with high fuel prices, bankruptcy filings and billions in losses since 2001. To cope with rising fuel prices, Dallas-based Southwest Airlines Co. on Friday raised one-way fares by up to \$10 on flights of more than 1,000 miles and up to \$3 on shorter flights. Over the weekend, AMR Corp.'s American Airlines, UAL Corp.'s United Airlines and others had matched the increases, according to the carriers, analysts and experts who track fares.

TIA Study Finds 27 Million Travel for Food and Wine

A new study, commissioned by the Travel Industry Association in partnership with Gourmet magazine and the International Culinary Tourism Association, indicated that during the past three years, some 27 million travelers, or 17 percent of American leisure travelers, specifically sought culinary and wine-related activities while traveling. The study found culinary travelers generally are "younger, more affluent and better educated than non-culinary travelers" and typically seek "unique experiences" when traveling. The survey of 2,364 U.S. leisure travelers, called the first of its kind, was conducted by Edge Research. The top five destinations for food-oriented travel, according to the study, are California, Florida, New York, Texas and North Carolina. Details at 202-408-2183. (*Special to TA; Travel Weekly.com*)

AAA to Open Web Site to Non-Members

AAA is attempting to shed its members-only-label—at least in the world of virtual vacation bookings. For the first time, AAA.com is allowing non-members across the country to access trip-planning features once reserved for paying, card-carrying customers. It's part of AAA's effort to compete on a large scale with big names in online travel booking and driving directions. "People don't need a membership number to access Yahoo or MapQuest," said AAA spokesman Michael Pina. "To be more competitive, we're eliminating that barrier." While AAA will continue to offer roadside service, discounts and other certain features only to its 50-million paying members, it's planning to launch a media blitz next week aimed at luring a wider group of travelers to its Web site (*Orlando Sentinel.com/Business*)